Homeland Security Funding Bill Will Strengthen Border, Aviation & Port Security; Support First Responders
June 24, 2009

   WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) voted today in support of legislation to strengthen federal efforts to fight illegal immigration and boost border security, with a focus on the U.S.-Mexico border. The fiscal year 2010 Homeland Security funding bill also makes critical investments in aviation and port security and provides support for first responders. The bill passed the House of Representatives with overwhelming bipartisan support (389-37).

   "Violent Mexican drug cartels have caused an increase in drug and weapons smuggling along our southwest border, endangering American lives," said Rep. Charlie Melancon. "This bill will increase security and reduce violence along the border by investing in more agents, better equipment, and smarter technology. It also ensures we remain vigilant against terrorist threats from land, air and sea, and I am proud to support it."

   Rep. Melancon continued, "As a fiscal conservative, I am pleased this bill trims $1.8 billion in waste by eliminating or cutting funding for 57 different programs. While I believe more cuts could be made, these savings are a step forward in beginning to live within our means."

   The Homeland Security bill also includes provisions to add the names of all the Guantanamo detainees to the federal "No Fly" List and prohibit them from receiving any immigration benefits. Additionally, the bill provides $1.5 billion to identify and deport criminal illegal immigrants.

   In the area of emergency response and preparedness, the bill allocates $2 billion for disaster relief efforts and $935 million for FEMA in the coming fiscal year. Further, the bill provides $100 million for Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Grants for state and local governments.

   The bill also includes $250 million for port security grants to help U.S. ports meet enhanced post-9/11 security requirements.

   The FY10 Homeland Security Appropriations bill will fund the U.S. Department of Homeland Security from October 1, 2009 - September 30, 2010.

Highlights of the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill include:

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- **Increased Funding for Border Protection Overall:** The bill provides $10 billion for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) overall, with increased resources focused on the Southwest Border.

- **Additional Border Patrol Agents:** Funds the full costs of the planned target staffing level of 20,109 Border Patrol agents. Of the 20,109 Border Patrol agents, over 17,000 will be based on the Southwest Border - an increase of 6,000, or more than 50 percent, since 2006.

- **Southwest Border Investments in Infrastructure and Technology:** Provides $692 million for Southwest Border investments for Border Security Fencing, Infrastructure, and Technology (BSFIT).

- **CBP Southwest Border Anti-Drug Initiatives:** Provides $26 million for Southwest Border counterdrug initiatives under the CBP. Also provides $8 million to expand airplanes, helicopters, and UASs (Unmanned Aircraft Systems) to interdict cartel drug smuggling.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

- **ICE Initiatives for Southwest Border:** Provides $98 million for ICE to combat international trade in illicit drugs, weapons smuggling, and crimes, associated with violence along the Southwest Border. This includes funding for ICE investigations of transnational gangs, cross-border weapons smuggling, and drug smuggling investigations.

- **Identifying Criminal Illegal Immigrants:** Mandates that $1.5 billion of ICE's budget be targeted for identifying dangerous criminal undocumented individuals and prioritizing these individuals for removal once an immigration judge orders them deported. The bill fully funds the President's request to maintain an annual detention capacity for 33,400 individuals. This level amounts to a 67 percent increase since 2002 and is the highest detention capacity on record for federal immigration enforcement.

Northern Border Security

- **Increased Investment in Surveillance Systems:** The bill strongly supports efforts to secure the 4,000 miles of the sparsely populated, often remote Northern Border. It provides an additional $40 million to continue investments in mobile and remote video surveillance systems along the Northern Border.

Aviation Security

- **Explosive Detection Systems:** The 9/11 Commission recommended improving the explosive screening of checked baggage. The bill continues to implement that recommendation - providing $1 billion to purchase and install the latest explosive detection systems at airports nationwide. The Recovery Act also provided $700 million for like activities.

Port Security

- **Developing Systems for the Screening of Cargo Containers:** Provides $804 million for work at U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office to develop systems to screen cargo containers for weapons and nuclear materials. The Recovery Act also included $100 million for new inspection technology at ports of entry.

- **Overseas Cargo Container Security:** Provides $162 million to continue CBP's implementation of its efforts to strengthen operations at overseas ports to monitor and target cargo containers, and to develop better technology to accomplish this mission.

- **Port Security Grants:** Provides $250 million for port security grants to help U.S. ports meet enhanced post-9/11 security requirements.

First Responder Grants

- **State Homeland Security Grants:** Provides $950 million for State Homeland Security Grants to help states meet the needs of first responders, including hiring, training and equipping first responders to respond to terrorist attacks and catastrophic incidents.

- **Firefighter Assistance Grants:** Provides $380 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants for such purposes as funding equipment for firefighters.

- **Interoperable Communications:** Provides $50 million for interoperable communications - to ensure firefighters and emergency responders to talk to each other during a crisis.

Guantanamo Detainees

An amendment regarding Guantanamo detainees was added to the bill to require:

- **Individualized Threat Assessments:** Requires the Department of Homeland Security to conduct a detailed, individualized threat assessment of each of the Guantanamo detainees.

- **Adding Detainees to "No Fly" List:** Requires that the names of all the Guantanamo detainees be placed on the "No Fly" list - unless the President certifies in writing to Congress that the detainee poses no threat to the United States, its citizens, or its allies.

- **Prohibiting Any Immigration Benefits for Detainees:** Prohibits the use of any funds in the bill to provide any immigration benefit (such as a visa, admission into the U.S., or parole into the U.S.) to any Guantanamo detainee (with the clarification that nothing in this provision prohibits detainees from being brought into the U.S. for prosecution).

Other Provisions

- **FEMA:** Provides $935 million for FEMA and $2 billion for disaster relief activities to provide aid to areas struck by disasters and maintain a readiness level for future disasters.

- **Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Grants:** Provides $100 million for the National Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Fund, which provides grants to assist state and local governments in implementing hazard mitigation activities.

- **Cyber Security:** Provides $382 million to address the growing threats to our nation's cyber assets. DHS leads efforts to strengthen federal civilian computer networks against attack by consolidating internet access points and deploying network-based sensors to monitor for illegitimate intrusions.

- **E-Verify:** Extends the authorization of the E-Verify system for two years.

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